

## Guest Editorial

### **Voter Turnout: We can do better!**

I have spent a great deal of time thinking and talking to folks about the August Primary Election.

First and foremost, my thoughts were about the great job Wyoming's 23 County Clerks did conducting a flawless election. Secondly, I was pleased with the maiden voyage of our new statewide voter registration system which allowed every county access to the voter registration status of all Wyoming voters.

You might recall that just prior to the August Primary, the League of Women Voters held their State Convention and passed a resolution asking the Secretary of State to encourage Wyoming's 23 County Clerks to aggressively increase their efforts to register more Wyoming voters. I applaud the League's efforts to encourage more voting age folks to become involved. However, expanding our voter rolls does little good if those registered voters don't show up on Election Day.

The voter turnout for the August, 2008 Primary was disappointing, to say the least. In 2006 at the Primary Election, 46% of those registered to vote actually showed up on Election Day. The Primary Election this past August was not much better with a mere 47% of the registered voters actually casting ballots. More disappointing yet is the fact that in the 2006 and 2008 Primary Elections, 29% and 26%, respectively, of those who are of voting age bothered to vote.

Thomas Jefferson put it well: "We in America do not have government by the majority; we have government by the majority who participate."

**Wyoming, we can do better. Much better!**

As I travel I have been asked many questions:

Where do I vote?

You can go to the Polling Place Locator section of the Secretary of State's website at <http://soswy.state.wy.us> or contact your County Clerk for polling place information.

I forgot to register to vote. Is it too late?

No. That's not a problem. Wyoming is one of the few states which allows Election Day registration. You can show up at your polling place on Election Day, and register; then cast your vote. Remember to take your photo ID.

I won't be here on Election Day, can I vote absentee?

Yes. Wyoming has "no reason absentee voting." Contact your County Clerk for instructions.

In my office I have a photo of a 40 year old Iraqi man carrying his 80 year old father. The old man is missing feet because of the war raging in his country. This man was taking his Dad, on his back, to stand in line for hours, placing their lives in jeopardy, to cast the first ballots of their lifetime. I keep it in my office as a stark reminder that people around the world suffer and die for the right to vote. A right and privilege we as Americans are blessed with. As I considered the low turnout in recent elections, I thought of framing that photo with the title *Too Busy To Vote?*

Recently I talked about voting with former Superintendent of Public Instruction Judy Catchpole. She recommended that I read *Why Women Should Vote*; you can find it online under the same name. Anyone who reads about the price women paid to gain the right to vote would never again miss an opportunity to cast their ballots. Women were imprisoned, beaten and starved for their efforts to gain the right to vote.

Your vote is not only important nationally, it has tremendous value right here in your state, county and community. Who will represent you, on your City Council, School Board, County Commission or in the Legislature?

You can make a difference. Explore the candidates; decide who will best serve you . . . then VOTE!

Our votes are treasures, preserved by Americans who have died to protect this freedom. As citizens of the greatest nation on earth, I hope all of us will show our pride in America, by casting our votes on November 4<sup>th</sup>.

By  
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